

We need to look at helping provide the resources to our local communities to stop social promotion. It does not do our children any good to be promoted from grade to grade to grade when they cannot provide, they cannot read, they cannot provide themselves with the opportunity to learn more about geography and math and science.

So, Mr. Speaker, as paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln in conclusion, Abraham Lincoln talked about making sure that we all have the opportunities not to guarantee that we will all finish the race of life at the same time. No, nobody can guarantee that, but at least we get the opportunity for an equal start in life, and that comes back to education.

Let us work together across the aisle, Democrat and Republican, for creative bold new reforms in education as the new Democratic coalition has sought to do.

WHAT WE WOULD BE DOING BY AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION TO MAKE IT ILLEGAL TO DESECRATE THE AMERICAN FLAG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we have on our schedule the debate and the vote on a constitutional amendment, the amendment that would make the desecration of the flag illegal. Many who support this amendment imply that those of us who oppose it for some reason might be unpatriotic. That, of course, is not true.

I would like to call attention to my fellow colleagues just exactly what I see us doing by amending the Constitution.

The very first thing that Communist China did after it took over Hong Kong was to pass legislation to make sure that it was illegal to desecrate the Chinese flag. Now let me say that one time again. As soon as Red China took over Hong Kong, that was the very first thing they did. One of the first pieces of legislation was to make sure that the people of Hong Kong knew it was illegal to do anything to desecrate the Chinese flag.

Now another interesting thing about the Chinese and their flag is that we monitor human rights in China. As a matter of fact, the State Department is required to come before the House and the Senate and report to us about the violations of human rights in China. The purpose is to find out whether or not they qualify for full trade with us, and the argument comes up every year. Some say, well, they violate civil rights and human rights all the time; therefore, we should not be trading with Red China, which is an argument that can be presented.

But in this report that came out in April to summarize last year, our gov-

ernment lists as a violation of human rights that we are holding them accountable for that we want to use against them so that we do not trade with them is the fact that two individuals last year were arrested because they desecrated the Communist Chinese flag.

□ 1845

I think that is pretty important. We should think about that. First, the Chinese Government makes it illegal to desecrate a flag in Hong Kong, and then they arrest somebody and they convict them, and they want to hold it against them and say we do not want to give them Most Favored Nation status because they are violating somebody's human rights.

Mr. Speaker, my point is obviously that why do we want to emulate them? There are other countries around the world that have similar laws: Iraq, Cuba, Haiti, Sudan; they all have laws against desecration of the flag. But in this country we have not had this. We have never put it in the Constitution. This debate would dumbfound our Founders to think that we were contemplating such an amendment to the Constitution.

We have existed now for 212 years since the passage of our Constitution, and we have not had laws like this, but all of a sudden we feel compelled. What is the compulsion? Do we see on the nightly news Americans defying our flag and defying our principles of liberty? I cannot recall the last time I saw on television an American citizen burning an American flag or desecrating our flag. So all of a sudden now we decide it is a crisis of such magnitude that we have to amend the Constitution; at the same time, challenging the principles of freedom of expression.

There is one State in this country that has a law which they have the right to, a law against desecration of the flag. And the flag police went to a house to find out what was going on because they were flying their flag upside down. What is going to happen when we try to define "desecrate"? Desecrate is usually something held for religious symbol. Have we decided to take the flag and make it a holy symbol? But will a towel that is in the shape and the color of a flag that somebody is lying on at the beach, is that going to be a reason to call the FBI and call the flag police in to arrest someone for this desecration? Because we do not define the desecration, we just say we will write the laws to police this type of activity.

Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks we have had many Members in this Congress cite the Constitution. As a matter of fact, the Constitution is cited all the time. Sometimes I see it inconsistently cited, because when it pleases one to cite the Constitution, they do; and

when it does not, they forget about it. But just recently we have heard the citing of the Constitution quite frequently. In the impeachment hearings: We have to uphold the Constitution, we have to live by our traditions and our ideals. Just last week we were citing the Constitution endlessly over the second amendment which I strongly support, and which I said the same thing. We must uphold the Constitution to defend the second amendment. But all of a sudden here we have decided to change the Constitution that we are in some way going to restrict the freedom of expression.

We say, well, this is bad expression. This is ugly people. These are people that are saying unpopular things, and they are being obnoxious. But, Mr. Speaker, the first amendment and the freedom of expression was never put there for easygoing, nice, conventional, noncontroversial speech. There is no purpose to protect that. Nobody cares. The purpose of freedom of expression is to protect controversy, and if somebody is upset and annoyed, the best thing we can do with people like that is to ignore them. If we pass a constitutional amendment and people are so anti-American that they want to display their anti-Americanism, they will love it. They will get more attention because we will be sending in the Federal flag police to do something about it.

Some will argue the Constitution does not protect freedom of expression; it protects freedom of speech, and this is not speech, this is ugly expression. But the Constitution does, does protect freedom of expression. That is what speech is. What about religion? To express one's religious beliefs. What about one's property, the right to go in and express what one believes? That is what freedom is all about is the freedom of expression and belief. I do not see how this country can become greater by having an amendment written that is in some ways going to curtail the freedom of Americans to express themselves. We have not had it for 212 years, and here we are going to change it.

It is expected that this will be passed overwhelmingly, and in the Senate possibly as well, and then throughout the country, but I do not see this as a positive step. We here in the Congress should think seriously before we pass this amendment.

NEXT STEPS FOR REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, we first need to go back to the American